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Australia's New England Seeks Statehood

Distomo, the Little Town That Wasn't There

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FINE NEW ENGLAND WOOL, AUSTRALIAN, THAT IS—Prize Merino Ram Lets His Owner Inspect Long-Staple Fleece, Rich Product of Australia's New England Region

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of the New England Range, which tops 5,000 feet. Near Grafton a hydro-electric scheme feeds light and power to the north coast. From Grafton north to the Queensland border, the climate allows cultivation of sugar cane, pineapples, and bananas.

The town of Armidale in the center of the New England Range would become New England's capital. West of Armidale, the new state would sweep some 260 miles through wheatlands and grazing country where Australia raises some of its finest wool. New England's northwestern corner would touch Queensland near Goodooga. The border would then angle back to the Hunter River and Newcastle.

The state would include western sheep towns with tongue-twisting aboriginal names: Goondublui, Boggabilla, Wallangarra, Collarenebri, and Wee Waa. One of the few English-name settlements is Come by Chance.

Australia's New England shares another feature with America's. Its scenery and sport attract thousands of vacationers. They ride and hike through towering forests, sail and fish off the coast, flick fly rods over mountain streams to tempt four-pound rainbow trout. But an American New Englander visiting this region would miss winter sports. While Australian skiers slice alpine slopes in southern New South Wales and northern Victoria, New England's northern beaches still lure swimmers.

Australia's constitution allows new states to be carved from the six existing ones. Most are big enough to afford partition. (Western Australia, the largest, would hold Texas about three times over.) But no new state can be "born" without consent of its parent.

Many demands for partition have arisen, but no area has come as close to achieving it as New England. Its university has been made an independent unit instead of an offshoot of Sydney University. The region has its own Constituent Assembly which can pass laws but not enforce them. It even boasts a New England flag.

In a statewide vote on self-government for New England, held in 1953, 77 percent of the people in 21 New England counties voted for separation. New South Wales wouldn't let them go, but enthusiasm still burns brightly among Australia's "Yankees."

THREE LIONS

Australia's New England Seeks Statehood

Smoke-shrouded collieries like the one above lie on the outskirts of Newcastle, Australia. Their output of coal adds to the industrial reputation of mighty New South Wales, Australia's oldest, richest, most populated state. But the day may come when Newcastle puts its mines and heavy production to work for a brand-new Australian state.

A coastal center north of Sydney, Newcastle ranks as the chief city of New England, a roughly triangular region covering the northeast of New South Wales. If the majority of New Englanders get their way, the district may set up shop on its own—as the nation's seventh state.

Strangely, independent-minded New England has a lot in common with its American counterpart in northeastern United States. Close to the same size, it is also a rich, productive region with well-developed industries and a population that outnumbers that of two Australian states.

The fertile Hunter River Valley, where spreading orchards grow grapes, oranges, other fruits, marks the southern boundary of the would-be state. At the river's mouth stands Newcastle, throbbing with steelworks, shipbuilding plants, and harbor activities. Near-by mines tap 15,000 square miles of coalfields that sprawl northward along the coast.

Farmlands mingle with stands of heavy timber along the eastern slope

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Surprises mounted when the Shors reached little Distomo. The mayor greeted them at the village square. Townsfolk crowded up to shake hands and hustle them to a coffee shop. The car was whisked away.

Distomo, it appeared, had waited some 10 years to repay a "debt" to the United States. During World War II, occupying German troops, maddened by the guerrilla activities of fiercely independent townsmen, had massacred 218 villagers. Later, money came from the United States with which to rebuild homes. Americans adopted Distomo orphans, and, thinking the village had been wiped out, named a New Jersey housing project after it to keep the name alive.

"Now you've come," said the mayor. "So we say 'Thank you' to you for all America."

Villagers swamped the Shors with gifts and warmed them with friendship. As for the car, it hove in sight, good as new. The mayor's brother owned a modern machine shop to maintain his fleet of bauxite trucks. The charge? Nothing.

Driving away, misty-eyed, to continue their trip, the Shors resolved to visit Distomo Village on the outskirts of Atlantic City. Months later they did, telling their story to a young resident.

"If something of the spirit of those people has taken root here, we're better off for it," he said. "The world can't have too many places like that one."

GREEK TREAT IN DISTOMO—Baked for a Forthcoming Wedding, These Cookies Were Passed Around to Villagers and Pressed on the Shors as a Mark of Friendship

JEAN AND FRANC SHOR, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF

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JEAN AND FRANC SHOR, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC STAFF

Sketches from the Geographic's Global Notebook

Distomo, the Little Town That Wasn't There

Twisting over a back road near Mount Parnassós where the Delphic Oracle shaped destinies in ancient Greece, the American automobile met a Greek mule—and came out second best. Swerving to avoid collision, the car hit a rock and tore its crankcase.

Miles from any large town, Jean and Franc Shor, writers and photographers for *The National Geographic Magazine,* pitched camp while a Greek friend went for help. This mishap could prove a setback to the Shors' magazine assignment—to cover Greece and Turkey from Athens to Istanbul. (See NGM, Jan. '56.)

Then a farmer appeared, flourishing a note from their friend: "I am at the first village. They can do everything we want."

Dubiously, the Shors scanned their map. The first village was a tiny isolated place, Distomo (Dhístomon)—unlikely to boast garages or mechanics. They were astonished when, as Franc reports, "the biggest truck I had ever seen in Greece roared up over the hill. Brand-new, it looked powerful enough to tow the battleship *Missouri* over the Rocky Mountains on a muddy day."

Two mechanics jumped out with a towing cable. Trouble: the hook wouldn't fit. But the abbot of a near-by monastery rode by and offered his rope (above). In a moment the tow got under way.

ARTHUR S. ALBERTS; ACME NEWSPICTURES (RIGHT)

Off the palm-dotted shores of Accra, Gold Coast's capital, husky paddlers speed surfboats (left) out to anchored merchant ships waiting to exchange cargoes of cotton cloth, cement, and tobacco for sacks of cocoa beans or copra.

Legislators and tribal chiefs from the country's main sections—Gold Coast Colony, Ashanti, and Northern Territories—meet in Accra's Legislative Assembly (above). Delegates en route might pass a girl on her way to market (right), or drive through clusters of mud huts on flat, brown stretches in the Northern Territories. Its inland reaches, including part of the old German colony of Togoland, give Gold Coast a chunky rectangular look on the map.

Ashanti tribesmen cut giant hardwoods (right) in the central section.

Malaria and yellow fever once made the oblong land a white man's coffin. Now modern medicine, industry, and new freedom make it the black man's hope chest.

ARTHUR S. ALBERTS

Freedom's Gleam Brightens Gold Coast

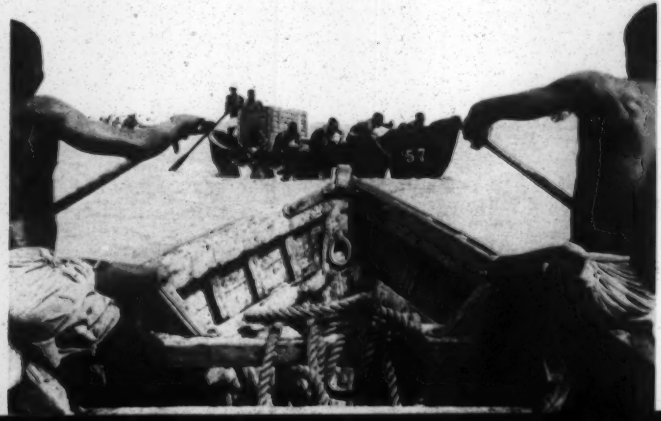
Gold Coast leaders see a glowing future for a land that got its first real taste of freedom just five years ago.

Under British supervision, the people held their first elections then and started governing their Oregon-size country themselves (right). For prime minister they called on American- and British-educated Kwame Nkrumah, who stepped from a prison cell in England to become black Africa's George Washington. His aim—full independence for his native country by peaceable means—may be reached this year.

Gold Coast hopes to become west Africa's chief industrial center. Plans call for building three of the continent's most modern ports, introducing new farming methods, and constructing a Volta River power project to turn plentiful Gold Coast bauxite into aluminum.

Gold, still an important export, first brought Europeans—and a name—to this coast (left) in 1471. Columbus visited here ten years before he discovered America. Later, slave traders made Gold Coast a base of operations. Today, the country gets much of its wealth from cocoa beans (cacao) that provide the world with a third of its chocolate.

GEORGE ABRAHAM; ARTHUR S. ALBERTS (BELOW)



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storm within sight of the hotel. William Curtis and Allan Ormsbee, both athletes, chose a fine day for their fatal climb—June 30, 1900.

Such weather has stirred scientific interest since 1870 when two professors opened a year-round observatory on the summit. Today's hardy young weathermen spend brutally cold winters atop the peak to help make forecasts for the nation's northeast. Their instruments have recorded earth's highest wind velocity—231 miles an hour. Huddled in parkas, faces sheathed in masks and glare goggles, these stalwarts take their readings despite bone-piercing 40-below-zero cold and "routine" 100-mile-an-hour winds—a combination that saps vitality quicker than Antarctica's less-windy deep freezes.

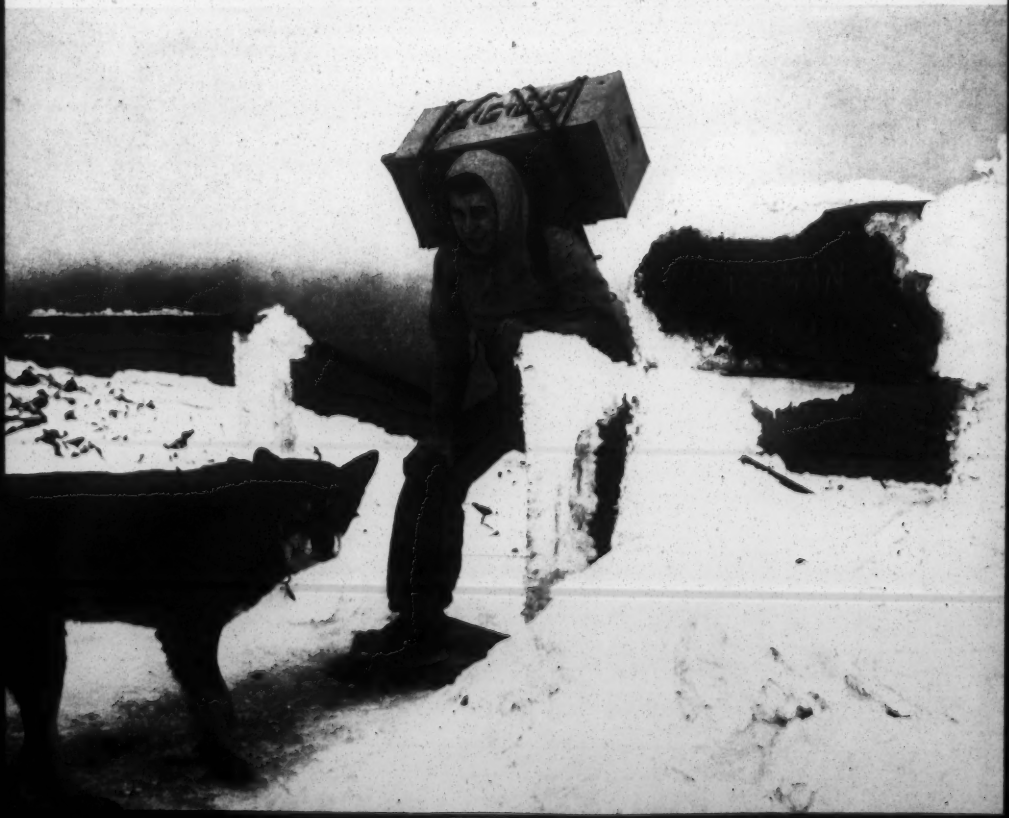
These men depend on drift-bucking, tractorlike "Sno-Cats" for basic supplies. Bath water comes from melted snow. Luxuries they blithely pack on their backs when they return to their ice-bound domain after a holiday in civilization—so near on the map, so far down the mountain.

Weathermen have company now. Scientists use Washington's summit as Arctic testing ground for jet engines whose weird howl plays a duet with the wind. Soldiers try out the latest army sleeping bags.

Television maintenance men swell the summit's still-modest winter population. They guard the antenna which serves northern New England and is known, incidentally, as the "North Pole."

HOME IS THE HIKER—Packing Fresh Eggs, a Weatherman Tops Mount Washington's Summit to Find His Malemute Friend Waiting—along with a Blanket of September Snow

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER ROBERT F. SISSON



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Storm Gods Rule on Popular Mount Washington

The bald old summit above, cluttered with buildings and installations, looks like an easy peak to reach. It is. Cars, even a railroad, scale Mount Washington, roof top of New Hampshire's White Mountains.

But the cold frosting that etches it in this wintry picture reveals another side to its character. Its weather ranks with the world's worst. Veteran climbers say that no mountain so accessible is so dangerous.

Mount Washington's savage storms whirl without warning from deceptively blue skies. Hikers, lured to New England's highest point by the promise of a fine day, are suddenly slugged by 100-mile-an-hour gusts, sleet and snow, and plummeting temperatures. The 6,288-foot summit catches icy winds howling down from near-by Canada, Atlantic storms pushing inland. Result: brief tempests as violent as the man-killing gales that wrap Mount Everest.

Mount Washington has killed nearly 40 climbers, a small toll considering the thousands who have scaled the peak since an adventurous Irishman, Darby Field, first conquered it in 1642. But the list of tragedies and narrow escapes far eclipses that of much more formidable heights.

Frederick Strickland, a young Englishman, reached the summit in October, 1849, making the first recorded cold season ascent. But on the way down, an ice-laden gale caught and killed him. A few years later, after a carriage road and the Summit House had been built, other lives were lost, among them young Lizzie Bourne who died in a September

HAROLD ORNE

WEIRD FORMATIONS ADORN KING WINTER'S THRONE—Horizontal Feathers of Ice Pointing into the Wind Smother Mount Washington's Weather Recorders. Freezing Mist Blown at Hurricane Force Sometimes Extends Ice Banners to Four-Foot Lengths